

The Old Paths

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"Some Things Baptism Does ..."

Jarrod Jacobs

Lately, we have had some baptisms here. We rejoice with those who have made this choice, and those who are Christians need to look and see how we can help strengthen these dear ones as they begin their journey for the Lord. In connection with this, I thought this would be a good time for us to go to the Bible and study some things baptism does in the lives of people. What does baptism do for man? What purpose does it serve?

Baptism Remits Sins

One point that is apparent in the New Testament is that baptism remits (forgives) men of sins. Upon accepting the Lord's plan of salvation, which includes baptism, one's sins are blotted out and his soul is clean! When Jesus told His apostles to go preach the gospel to all nations, He made this point clear. He said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mk. 16:16). After hearing the Lord's command, the apostle Peter preached "*repentance and remission of sins*" in Jerusalem (Lk. 24:47) on the day of Pentecost. Peter told the Jews: "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38). This same apostle later wrote a letter to Christians where he stated, "*The like figure where-*

unto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 3:21). Yes, baptism saves us from our sins. To deny this point is to deny very plain Bible teaching.

Through Baptism, One Is Added To The Church

Simultaneous with the forgiveness of sins, we also find folks being added to the Lord's church when they are baptized. This fact is stated in Acts 2:47. It reads, "*praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*" Notice that those who were baptized were saved, and those who were saved were added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47)!

This is a key point, because many today have completely separated salvation from the Lord's church in their teaching. They claim they can be saved one day and added to a church on another day. Some claim to have been "church members" for years, but only "saved" in recent months. This view of the church and salvation is foreign to the Scriptures!

On the contrary, what we see is that the church is composed of saved people, only saved people, and no unsaved people! It is the church (saved people) who are called the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; I Cor. 12:12-14). It is this group of saved people (the church) who will one day be gathered and

delivered up to God (I Cor. 15:24).

When we understand this simple truth, it ought to help us appreciate what it means to be a part of the Lord's church. May we also thank God for allowing us to be in this great fellowship. Truly, we would have none of this if it were not for God and the sacrifice of His Son (Jn. 3:16).

Baptism Gives Us The Name "Christian"

The name "Christian" is a special name. It is a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 56:5, 62:2, 65:15). In Acts 11:26, we read, "*And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*"

Note the end of this verse says "*in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*" The phrase "were called" in English comes from a single Greek word, "chrematizo" and means they were divinely called of God. In other words, "*the disciples*" were called "*Christians*" by God first in Antioch! Who are "*the disciples*"? They are called "*the church*" earlier in verse 26. They are the followers of Christ. Now we ask, "How did they become disciples, or how did they become a part of the church?" The answer is that they became a part of the church when they submitted to the Lord's plan for salvation! In other words, when they were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, 47)! In so doing, these people (disciples) were called Christians by God, thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy.

Therefore, when folks today do the same thing that these folks did, we know that God also considers them Christians. The question we must ask is, "Would God consider YOU a Christian?" Have you been baptized for the remission of

sins?

Baptism Makes You A Child Of God

One thing that the Bible teaches is that if one wishes to belong to God, he must be *"born again."* Peter said we are *"born again ... through the living and abiding word of God"* (I Pet. 1:23). In other words, through the teaching and through our obedience to the word taught, we are born again, or we become God's children. Jesus stated that unless we are *"born again"* or are *"born of water and the spirit"* we cannot *"see the kingdom of God"* (Jn. 3:3, 5). Therefore, to be *"born again"* means to be *"born of water and the spirit"* and vice versa. Jesus is not describing a baby being born of his mother, but a man being born again! Jesus said such action results in him entering the kingdom of Heaven. Such obedience results in a soul becoming a child of God!

In this context, we read of the Romans, who, having been baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-6, 16-18) were called, *"children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ"* (Rom. 8:16-17). Yes, baptism makes us children of God.

When we heed the word of God (I Pet. 1:23; Rom. 1:16) and are *"born of water and the spirit"*, (Jn. 3:5) we can be Christians. We can be children of God, looking forward to that blessed inheritance awaiting the faithful when this life ends (I Pet. 1:3-4).

Conclusion

May we thank God for His simple and beautiful plan of salvation. May we rejoice at what this does for us when we lovingly accept God's gracious plan, and follow it by faith. Spiritual blessings can be ours, and Heaven can be our eternity if we will just do as he says to do!

"Longing For God's Word"

Jarrold Jacobs

Psalm 119:20 and 40 state very interesting thoughts that I think are worth studying. In verse 20 we read, *"My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times."* Verse 40 says, *"Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life."*

Go back and read these verses again, for they reveal much. Notice that David did not merely say he longed for God's word. He longed for it *"at all times"* (v. 20). This verse is similar to Psalm 1:2 which tells us that the wise man meditates upon God's word *"day and night"*! Verse 40 says he recognizes that it is God's word that has life-giving power. On seven other occasions in Psalm 119 alone, David repeats his praise for the life-giving power of God's word.

As I read those statements, I thought about myself. Can I say that I truly *long* for God's word? Can I say that my soul is *"consumed"* for longing for His word, and that I want to hear it *"at all times"*? Friends, do we see what a high priority David placed upon God's word? What priority do we give God's word? Within the Bible,

we find the instructions for salvation from sin (i.e., new life). We also find sustaining power within the Scripture, for the Bible is our soul's sustenance (I Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:14).

In our society, we recognize our dependence upon food. We know that eating a proper diet has life-sustaining power for our bodies. But, are we ready to admit that the Bible has life-giving and sustaining power for our souls? David, the king of Israel, recognized it! Though a mighty king, a great warrior, and though he had power over a nation, he readily confessed his dependence upon the word of God. Jesus stated this as well when He said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matt. 4:4). How much more ought we confess such when we understand that we are in need of that life-sustaining power today?

When we appreciate God's word the way David did, we will not want to hear the experiences, philosophies, and creeds of men. We will only want to hear the pure, unadulterated, complete, and simple word of God (Acts 10:33). We will readily say as Paul did, *"Preach the word"* (II Tim. 4:2)! When we humble ourselves as David, we will understand the words of Job who said, *"I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food"* (Job 23:12). Let us read the Bible again *"for the first time"* and glean the blessings!

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